



C H U R C H N E W S

F R O M T H E N O R T H E R N C O U N T R I E S

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Same Hymn-Book for Seamen from Northern Countries.

Close co-operation was established last year between the Northern Seamen's Mission organizations through the founding of a Northern Seamen's Missionary Council and the value of such co-operation has already been proved in several instances.

At the first meeting of the Seamen's Missionary Council recently at Fredrikstad, Norway, it was thus decided to publish a hymn-book common to seamen from the Northern countries, containing all the best known and most often used hymns from the hymn-books in the various countries, to be used in the seamen's churches all over the world. Furthermore, the possibility of co-operation in establishing new seamen's mission stations was discussed, with special regard to South America, India, and several other places where the number of seamen from the Northern countries has been on the increase during the past few years. Finally, it was agreed to join efforts in the matter of films and the production of films to be used in the work of the Seamen's Missions.

The work has developed greatly in recent years. Altogether, there are 75 Northern seamen's churches and the Council were fully agreed upon continuing and further widening the collaboration.

Mission to the Buddhists Establishes Study Centre in Hongkong.

The Northern Christian Mission to the Buddhists, the President of which is the former Bishop of Haderslev, Denmark, is about to open up a study centre at the mission station of Tao-Fong Shan in Hongkong where Christian missionaries and scholars may study Buddhism. An extensive library, collected by the Mission's "grand old man", Dr. Karl Ludvig Reichelt from Norway, is to be included in the library of the study centre as a special section of the library. A short while

ago Dr. Reichelt's son, the Rev. Gerhard Reichelt, left for Hongkong where he will supervise the establishment of the study centre, among other things.

Northern Conference on Christian Education.

At the end of September Christian educationalists from the Northern countries met for a conference in Helsinki (Helsingfors), the subject of the conference being "Christian Education". The background for it was the ever more clearly felt secularization of both home, church, and school. A number of speakers, theologians as well as educationalists, dealt with the various aspects of the problems of education and the question of Christian instruction in the schools, and the addresses gave rise to lively discussions.

In Norway, as well as in Finland, there are special institutes for Christian Education and in Sweden there are several institutions with similar aims.

DENMARK

Danish Church Delegation to Rumania and Bulgaria in October.

On October 16th a delegation from the Danish Church left for Rumania on a three weeks' stay at the invitation by the Orthodox Church in order to study the conditions of the Rumanian Church. Head of the delegation is Bishop Skat Hoffmeyer, Århus, and its other members are Dean Alf Johansen, Salling, and Rev. Svend Borregaard, Copenhagen, who both have an intimate knowledge of the Orthodox Church; Rev. Poul Hansen, Ryslinge, who has been to Rumania twice before; and Rev. Mogens Zeuthen, who at the moment is a secretary for the Eastern European minority churches under the Lutheran World Federation.

The Danish delegation, which, as far as is known, is the first one from a non-Orthodox Western church, received the invitation last spring and it was decided to accept it at the Bishops' Conference in September.

On leaving Rumania the delegation will continue the journey to Bulgaria where it has been invited on a few days' visit by the Bulgarian Patriarch.

Russian Church Delegation Invited to Denmark.

The Bishops of the Danish Lutheran National Church have decided to invite a delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church to visit Denmark. The visit should be a further deepening of the contact established between the two countries by the visit of the Danish church delegation to the Soviet Union in November-December last year. The Bishops' Conference has set up a committee, including Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, Bishop Erik Jensen, and Bishop Halfdan Høgsbro, to make preparations for the stay. It is not yet known when the delegation will arrive, nor who its members will be.

Bishop Berggrav Warns Against Ecclesiastical Contacts with the Soviet Union.

The visit last year by the Danish church delegation to the Soviet Union and the decision by the Bishops' Conference, firstly, to invite Russian ecclesiastics on a return visit, and secondly, to accept the invitation for sending a delegation to Rumania, has caused the Norwegian Bishop, Eivind Berggrav, in a statement to the newspaper "Kristeligt Dagblad", Copenhagen, to warn against such ecclesiastical contacts with the Eastern European countries. Among other things, Bishop Berggrav says,

"In the Soviet Union there is a Church which with servility submits to an openly declared godless State and its propaganda, - yea, the State is worse than godless, in as much as its scientific outlook on life is hostile to any kind of Christian faith. By visiting and celebrating and joining in religious services with a church like the Orthodox Church in Russia we are on the verge of committing treason."

Bishop Berggrav also points out that the Orthodox Church, on the whole, goes its own way in many fundamental matters and constantly refers to its exceptional position in relation to the other churches. The Bishop does feel that the Evangelical churches may have, and also ought to have, contact with the Orthodox churches, but he warns against believing that such contact, as a matter of course, is the same as fellowship. "At heart, the Orthodox concept of the Church is the same as that of the Roman Catholic Church and completely foreign to the Protestant churches," he continues.

About developments in the Ordass case, Bishop Berggrav declares that to his mind it was the Lutheran Church in Hungary which failed most grievously by accepting the false accusations and sentence by the rulers in power and by installing a new bishop in the place of Bishop Ordass.

The leader of the Danish ecclesiastical delegation to the Soviet Union, Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, Copenhagen, strongly refutes the idea that it should be "on the verge of committing treason" to visit, celebrate, and take part in church services together with the Orthodox Church in Russia. The Bishop refers to the fact that, previous to accepting the invitation, he had discussed the matter with leaders of the World Council of Churches and of the Lutheran World Federation and they had all been in favour of accepting it. Such a visit was also in accordance with the wish for closer contact, as expressed in the message from the World Council of Churches to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Bishop also mentions the many other churches in West who have renewed the contact with the Russian Church, and he maintains that the trip by the Danish delegation was an expression of a true ecumenical spirit.

In a later and more detailed statement, Bishop Berggrav further emphasizes that the risk connected with that kind of visits is not of a political nature, but consists in letting the church people in the Soviet Union get the impression that the Church's compromise with the totalitarian and God-hostile regime is being passed over in silence. "In practice, a kind of concordat has been established, according to which the Church is permitted to live against keep-

ing quiet about all unpleasant things. Thus this Church is in danger of denying the responsibilities towards one's neighbour as preached in the Gospel. The mutual visits and festivities create a "false impression", both in the Soviet Union church and in our own churches."

The Bishop feels that a poor kind of diplomacy is being introduced into the churches when much of what has been said in the course of these visits must be concealed, both in the Soviet and in the free churches, and he concludes,

"We are not allowed, out of Christian benevolence, to leave truth in the lurch. Without truth, the benevolence may easily become a sentimental bog of unreality."

The Methodists from Northern Europe Meet in Århus.

The Northern European Conference of the Methodist Church, which includes representatives from the Methodist Churches in the Northern countries, the Baltic States, and the Methodist Mission to Russia, was held in Århus from 26th - 30th September. The Conference opened at the Town Hall where, amongst others, the Bishop of Århus of the Lutheran National Church, Dr. Skat Hoffmeyer, addressed the assembly. The Bishop bid the delegates from the sister church welcome and told about his many impressions, not the least from America, of the greatness and generosity of the Methodist Church. "We in the National Church have much to learn from Methodism," the Bishop ended.

At the Conference it was discussed, among other things, how a number of resolutions, passed at the General Assembly in the U.S.A. last spring, might be carried out in practice in the Northern European countries, and plans were made for the work in the future.

It was learnt at the Conference that the Annual Assemblies in all the countries represented had sanctioned the proposal of the General Assembly to permit women to hold ecclesiastical office in the Methodist Church.

There were no representatives present from the Baltic States, but Bishop Sigg from Switzerland told about his recent visit to the Baltics and expressed the hope that these countries might be represented at the next conference four years hence. A special greeting was despatched from Århus to the Methodist Churches in the Baltic countries.

FINLAND

"The Old Play About Everyman" on the Steps of Turku (Åbo) Cathedral.

One Sunday recently the Finnish Theatre in Turku (Åbo) gave a performance of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's version of the medieval morality, "The Old Play About Everyman", on the broad steps leading up to the Cathedral. The initiative for co-operation with the church came from the Director of the Theatre, Janko Paavola; and Dean Osmo Alaja expressed his hope that this first attempt might prove to be the beginning of a fine tradition. The Director was happy that the Theatre's

original production of the play from the very start was built up as taking place on the steps of a church, or else the necessity for a new setting and instruction would have made the "guest performance" impossible. The music by Sibelius was played to great effect by the Theatre's orchestra director, Almos Maattola, who is also a trained organist.

The President and the Prime Minister on Their Opinions of the Church.

The President of the Finnish Republic, Urho Kekkonen, as well as the Prime Minister, K.A. Fagerholm, recently made some interesting statements on their opinions of the Church. At the dinner in honour of the bishops on the occasion of the installment of the new Bishop of Lapua (Lappo), Eero Lehtinen, the President said, among other things,

"Down through the centuries the Church has been a firm cultural and spiritual factor in the life of the Finnish nation upon which its secular life might rest with profit. It has kept its deep roots in the Finnish soil

"We are grateful that, even in the worst and most dangerous difficulties, the church bells have been able to sound freely and call church-goers to listen to the Word which will never perish

"New times, new financial and social conditions make new demands on the Church. It must not isolate itself, but must courageously keep in step with the life of the nation and seek to spread its beneficial activities also to those circles where perhaps, for one reason or another, there was previously no receptiveness for the Christian message."

The Prime Minister, K.A. Fagerholm, who left the Lutheran National Church in 1923, together with a number of other Social-Democrats when the Act of Religious Freedom was passed, was asked by the Finland-Swedish weekly, "Församlingsbladet", why he resigned his membership and whether his opinion of the Church has altered since then. The Prime Minister answered,

"I left the National Church because I could not tolerate that the men of the Church so very often were adverse to the lower classes and their spokesmen, the Labour Movement. At that time the Church might be identified with social conservatism - not to say reaction. I felt that I could not be a member of a church which often took the lead in the fight against all that which I thought right.

"Since then much has happened. Church-men have changed their attitude towards social problems. In many cases the Church has made considerable contributions in the social sphere. The Labour Movement of to-day may no longer simply regard a Church member as an adversary For this reason I have no cause to-day to criticize the Church or its servants - in the course of years I have learnt highly to appreciate many of those with whom I have come into contact. Also in the political life I have met many clergymen and I am not among those who will deny them the right to take an active part in politics."

Tommy Hicks Gathered Half a Million Listeners.

On his evangelization tour of Finland in July, August and September the American revivalist preacher, Tommy Hicks, collected half a million listeners. 15,000-16,000 of whom have signified that they have been converted through his message. Their respective congregations will now keep in touch with them.

The activity of Tommy Hicks has given rise to lively discussion in wide circles. Several voices in the press have criticized his American revivalist religion as well as his utilization of publicity and his whole manner of being as unsuited for Finland. But both the Christian newspaper "Kotimaa" in Helsinki (Helsingfors) and the Finland-Swedish weekly, "Församlingsbladet", adopted a positive attitude. "Kotimaa" described Hicks as being a "disturber of false peace", used by God. It is not only due to publicity when he has been able to gather such great audiences, the paper says, but also that there is more spiritual hunger and need than generally realized. "Församlingsbladet" is happy that he has been able to reach so many. True, his preaching is wanting in the thought of St. Paul's that the strength of God is made perfect in weakness - but this notwithstanding he excels for the power of his victorious message of Christianity. But, nevertheless, the paper does not doubt the sincerity of his message and appeals to people to follow up his work in the local congregations so that possible misunderstandings due to his preaching may be corrected.

Hicks' meetings were welcomed in wide circles, especially from the Lutheran National Church to the Pentecostal Mission.

"Association for Cure of Souls" Starts Its Own Paper.

An "Association for Cure of Souls" has been founded within the Finnish Lutheran National Church with the purpose of offering spiritual guidance and help by correspondence or through personal talks. The Association will publish its own periodical, "Kirjekyyhkynen" ("The Dove-Pigeon"), and recently it conducted a special training course in care of souls.

ICELAND

Unusual New Church in Reykjavik.

In the capital of Iceland, Reykjavik, which since 1910 has grown in population from 4,500 to 40,000 inhabitants, several churches are under construction at the moment. In New Year's the New Church ("Ný-kirkja") will be ready for consecration. It is built on modern lines with a massive tower, carrying a cross. The nave is lowest at the entrance and increases in height towards the altar. The walls and ceiling are covered with elm wood, but the wall behind the altar is covered with blue tiles and continues all the way up into the tower, so that the end of the wall can not be seen from the church, thus creating a sense of infinity. The unusual church, designed by August Falsson, will cost almost 4 million Icelandic crowns.

NORWAY

Rector of the University on the Limits of Science.

At the matriculation of the new students in September the Rector of the University of Oslo, Fredt Castberg, delivered an address which has caused wide interest. The speech dealt with the false belief that it is possible for Science to "provide the answers to the fundamental questions in life of what is the righteous deed and the righteous government, of the responsibility and the guilt of man".

Rector Castberg said that the time is past when people, like Socrates and the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment, might believe that it were possible for man, through methodical reasoning according to the laws of logic, to find the answers to ethical questions, answers which must be acknowledged by all. Nor is the postulate correct that natural science is able to give such answers, which is a common belief among enlightened people in our days. Science deals with that which actually happens and it is not possible from this to deduce logically what ought to happen.

"There is no getting around the fact", the Rector said, "that Science must renounce all thought of giving answers, not only to purely religious questions, but also to our fundamental problems of evaluation. When all is said and done, it must be a matter of faith what we are to regard as the goal of life. And the choice of means, provided by science and technology, to achieve this goal must also be a matter of faith and personal choice of standpoint. Science is able to tell us much about how we act and judge, and it is able to show us the consequences of our acts and judgments; but it is not able to tell us how we ought to act or how we ought to judge the good and evil in life."

Rector Castberg refuted the nihilistic point of view that, in that case, all opinions are equally good and that nothing is objectively valid. Our belief in ideals, duties, and responsibilities in life are not only the result of education and teaching, but are also formed in accordance with our inherited ethical instincts. And it seems as if our common human heritage may form the basis of something of common value and obligations in the life of man."

Rector Castberg finally mentioned tolerance as being an important supplement in the choice of a personal standpoint and emphasized that a scientist may, of course, also be at liberty to choose in matters of faith, even if his choice is here her no scientific authority. "It is good and right that we have also this side of our university life", the Rector concluded, "and I, for one, might wish that there were more of such personal choice of standpoint at the University than is the case to-day."

From Christian quarters the address was received with acclamation and the Christian daily in Oslo, "Vårt Land", draws attention to the fact that it ought to result in a totally new evaluation by the recently founded "Norwegian Ethical Association" (NVE No. 17) which maintains that ethical problems must be solved on the basis of "methodical thinking and scientific knowledge, irrespective of religious and metaphysical doctrines."

Congregational Campaigns in 38 Oslo Parishes This Month.

No less than 38 parishes in Oslo have simultaneous congregational campaigns from 14 - 21 October, consisting of five meetings in the evening and one closing service in the churches on the last Sunday.

A great preparatory work lies behind the drive. After having received a certain amount of instruction and preparation, thousands of laymen have called on all the homes in the parishes with invitations and in many cases these visits have led to personal talks with people about Christian problems. As an aid in this "Visiting Service" the secretary of the National Federation of Parish Relief Organizations, Olov Egeland, has published a small pamphlet, entitled "Going Into Service". Individual and joint prayers for the campaign have also had a very large place in the preparations.

39 clergymen and laypeople from all over the country are to speak at the evening meetings, and every morning these speakers and the congregational leaders will meet for mutual inspiration and renewal. In each parish a special committee has been appointed to be in charge of the follow-up work and, among other things, to keep in touch with people who have become known through the campaign.

Home Mission Refuses to Take Part in the Diocesan Meeting at Hamar.

The Bishop of Hamar, Kristian Schjelderup, does not feel that belief in eternal punishment in Hell is an integral part of the Lutheran Confession. This has occasioned a number of representatives of the organization "Inner Mission" to refuse to take part in the voluntary diocesan meeting to be held at Lillehammer from 16th - 18th October. The "Inner Mission" has repeatedly declared that full agreement in questions of faith must be an absolutely indispensable condition for co-operation and it is this principle which is now being carried out in practice. The new President of the "Inner Mission", Rev. Frederik Wisløff, stresses the fact that this is not a dictate from the leadership, but a decision reached by the individual members of the "Inner Mission" in the various parishes.

A number of newspapers accuse the "Inner Mission" of pursuing Bishop Schjelderup through a regular boycott. The mouth piece of the Oslo "Inner Mission", "Vår kirke", which is independent of the national organization, in an article dealing with the matter, states that the individual members must be free to say such a no, for reasons of conscience, to co-operation with the Bishop; but, on the other hand, the paper feels that it should be possible for them to attend the meeting, in spite of differences of opinion with regard to Bishop Schjelderup, since they all belong to the same Church.

Large Attendance at the Christian Schools for Young People.

A marked increase in the number of young people wishing to attend the Christian Young People's Schools is reported from Norway. In several cases the Schools have received far more applications than they have accommodation for. The reason for the increase is felt to be threefold: firstly, the greater number of children leaving school these years; secondly, a more favourable legislation in regard to obtaining financial aid for such a course; and finally, a more general and better understanding of the value of such Schools.

Centenary of the Norwegian Methodist Church.

Last month the centenary of the laying of the corner stone of the first Methodist church in Norway, and therefore also in the Northern countries, was celebrated at Sarpsborg. The celebrations lasted for a week and had drawn many visitors from other countries. An exhibition in connection with the jubilee showed the growth of the Methodist Church in Norway since 1856, and a bust of the founder of the Church, Rev. Ole Peter Petersen, was unveiled.

The Primate of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church, Bishop Johannes Smemo, Oslo, who took part in the celebrations, in his address said,

"The Methodist Church is the revivalist church second to none of the Christian churches in modern time. More than any other church it has the characteristics of the Bible and it is a wonder how, only 200 years after the Methodist fire broke out, it has spread to embrace all the world. Perhaps it might still be necessary to ask whether there were any need for the fire to jump to Norway - but a fire does not ask permission. It flares up where there is foundation for it. Such was the case in Norway. But there was also a counter-fire and, on behalf of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, I should like to express my gratitude that you did not employ propaganda where such propaganda was superfluous, but used it for the benefit of those who were in need of spiritual renewal. Nothing, which may possibly stand between us, must prevent us from giving thanks to God for the work done in Norway by the Methodists."

SWEDEN

Strong Christian Influence in the New Swedish Parliament.

The elections for the Lower House of the Swedish Parliament, which took place in September, have meant a greater Christian influence in the political life of the country during the next four years. No less than 30 organized members of the Free Churches will be seated in Parliament, most of them belonging to the Liberal people's party. In addition, several ministers from the Lutheran National Church have also been elected and not few of the other members of Parliament are known for their openly expressed Christian outlook. Among the newly elected is the well-known Free Church member, Augustinus Keijer, editor of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church's weekly, "Svensk Veckotidning".

There are 231 seats in the Swedish Lower House.

Joint Church Action Against the Jehova's Witnesses.

At a conference at Danderyd recently a number of prominent people from the Lutheran National Church and the Free Churches decided to start a joint action against the activities of the Jehova's witnesses. In the first place, it is planned to publish an easily understood and clearly worded pamphlet on the Christian eschatology to act as a counterpart to the phantasies and speculations resorted to by the Jehova's witnesses. It is acknowledged that the Christian denominations do not have clearly defined lines in these matters. Next, a treatise, to be published in mass editions, is under preparation to meet the challenge of the Jehova's

Witnesses in which their allegations will be disproved precisely and clearly. Finally, a religious-psychological investigation by experts will try to determine the special form for piety peculiar to the "Witnesses".

At the conference a working committee was set up to carry on the work. It consists of Bishop Manfred Björkquist, formerly Stockholm, of the Lutheran National Church, and two members of Parliament from the Free Churches, Augustinus Keijer and Axel Gustafsson.

The Jehova's Witnesses in Sweden number some 7.000 followers.

Swedish Pastoral Letter on the Abuse of Alcohol.

The abuse of alcohol in Sweden has grown alarmingly as mentioned in CN No. 19. Acknowledging the fact that one no longer dares to hope this is only a passing phenomenon, the Swedish bishops have put the matter before the clergy in a Pastoral Letter, signed by Archbishop Yngve Brilioth.

The Pastoral Letter emphasizes how disastrous this development is, both to the individual and to the community. Not only the flagrant abuses, but also misuse under more cultured forms, are dangerous in as much as the sense of responsibility and the ability to judge are dulled by it.

In this situation all the resources of the Church must be mobilized in order to make an effective contribution in the battle against alcoholism, the Pastoral Letter reads. The personal good example of the clergy is, of course, of great importance, but also an intensive information work is needed, both in regards to preaching, spiritual guidance, and, especially, in the work among the candidates for confirmation and among the young people.

The clergymen are called upon to offer personal and impartial assistance to the victims of alcoholism in co-operation with the temperance movements and other organizations. The ministers are strongly urged to back up and help the families of the abusers of alcohol and, in conclusion, the Pastoral Letter points out that this unhappy state of affairs further underlines the increasing responsibility of the Church in the life of the community, as the abuse of alcohol is no isolated phenomenon to be prevented and checked merely by information and propaganda.

Growing Ecumenical Inter-Course Among Swedish Students.

For the first time in ten years a joint students' meeting for members of the Free Churches and the Lutheran National Church was held this summer at Stjärnholm and this event has now led to increased ecumenical co-operation. At the summer meeting a lively debate on ecumenical matters was opened by Dr. Ansgar Eeg-Olofsson, and by the secretary of the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Bengt-Thure Molander. Various approaches to a closer co-operation between the student movement of the National Church and that of the Free Churches was discussed and the result is now that in future the two associations will pay regard to one another in the planning of the work and will keep in close touch with each other.

The next joint summer meeting has been fixed for 1959.

Many New Students at the Christian Folk High Schools.

This year the influx of students at the Christian Folk High Schools in Sweden seems to be larger than ever before. This is partly due to the fact that the number of young people is greatly increasing these years, but there seems also to be much to indicate that new sections of the community have "discovered" the Folk High Schools. There is not nearly enough accommodation at the Schools for the many young people who have applied for admittance this autumn. Approximately 75 per cent of the students are young women.

Cure by Prayer is Not Quackery.

Religious cure may become a form of quackery, but this is not the case if it is confined to intercession by prayer or symbolic acts, a report on quackery states. This report is the result of the investigations over 6 years by a committee of experts, appointed by the Swedish Parliament. In order that religious cure may be regarded as quackery it is necessary that it is combined with some kind of treatment, e.g. prescription of medicine. In recent years demands have been made by various quarters that big religious meetings where prayers are being offered up for the cure of invalids should be prohibited, but the Committee does not advocate any curtailment in the right to hold such meetings. On the other hand, the report emphasizes the desirability on the part of the community that religious cure is not being practiced in such a way that the patients are prevented from seeking medical assistance.

The five experts declare that much seems to indicate that quackery ought to be forbidden altogether, but they do not feel that the time is ripe yet. But it must be kept within narrow limits. Thus, it is proposed that sentences for quackery should be increased if the patients "have been caused no little harm or have been in danger of their lives or health"; that traveling quacks and quackery by correspondence should be prohibited; and that the list of complaints which must not be treated except by properly trained physicians should be extended to include also diabetes, epilepsy, illnesses in connection with pregnancy and childbirth as well as children's diseases during the first twelve months.

Radical Modernization of Clergymen's Training Necessary.

"When a theological candidate enters upon his service in the church, he knows more about the reasons compelling the Puritans to go to America than about the reasons driving young people from the country to the cities. Great sections of his congregation live in a world unknown to him."

With these words Bishop Bo Giertz, Göteborg (Gothenburg), in an interview with "Stockholms-Tidningen" demands a radical change in the theological curriculum in the Swedish Lutheran National Church. The Church has had its deepest roots in the community of peasants and even if the human problems at the core are the same for people in former days and to-day, the Church and its servants must make themselves acquainted with actual conditions of the modern world where the big cities and the industrialization have changed the structure of society. The academical theological training is exclusively concerned with the past so that a clergyman receives more knowledge about life in a medieval monastery than in a modern factory. This must be changed, the Bishop feels.

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES

This year has been a year of transition in the religious life of the United States. In 1929 there was a general feeling of optimism and confidence in the future of the country. The religious situation was generally regarded as favorable. The churches were full, and the people were active in their religious life. The religious situation was generally regarded as favorable. The churches were full, and the people were active in their religious life. The religious situation was generally regarded as favorable. The churches were full, and the people were active in their religious life.

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